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NEA FOR WITTES  
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TUNIS FOR SCHMONSEES

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [KIRF](#) [EG](#)  
SUBJECT: DAS WITTES ENGAGES GOE, CIVIL SOCIETY ON ELECTIONS, NAGA  
HAMADI, DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

REF: CAIRO 141; CAIRO 64; CAIRO 59; 09 CAIRO 2314; 09 STATE 130658

CLASSIFIED BY: Margaret Scobey, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

**1. KEY POINTS**

-- (C) In meetings January 24-25, NEA DAS Tamara Cofman Wittes assured activists of continuing U.S. commitment to promoting democracy and human rights. She urged the GOE to use the penal code, not the Emergency Law, to prosecute the January 6 sectarian killings in Naga Hamadi.

-- (C) The quasi-governmental National Council for Human Rights plans to begin training domestic election observers March 1, and is trying to c

-- (C) Deputy Foreign Minister Bassim said the GOE will use the Emergency Law to prosecute the Naga Hamadi killers quickly, and to signal that the crime infringed on Egyptian "national security." MFA officials asserted a Unified Places of Worship Law could exacerbate, rathe

-- (C) Responding to MFA opposition to USG funding for unregistered Egyptian NGOs, DAS Wittes stressed that the U.S. wants to support and engage with the full range of Egyptian civil society.

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**Elections: Observers and Credibility**  
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**12.** (C) Secretary-General of the quasi-governmental National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) Mukhlis Kutb said his organization plans to begin on March 1 training domestic observers from certain Egyptian NGOs for the 2010 Shura Council and Peoples' Assembly elections, expected in June and November respectively. He noted the training would be based on international and UN standards. He was confident the GOE High Election Commission, which will administer the elections with the Interior Ministry, will accept NGOs trained by NCHR as domestic

**13.** (C) Human Rights lawyer XXXXXXXXXXXXX said he expected the coming elections not to be free and fair, and urged the U.S. to begin planning a public response. He applauded A/S Posner's January 14 public comments on the Naga Hamadi killings, and encouraged the U.S. to consider using a similar public tone in response to expected election violations. XXXXXXXXXXXXX urged the U.S. to warn the GOE privately of "specific consequences" if the 2010 elect make a significant difference in the elections, noting she has been an international observer for Arab elections that appeared to be free and fair, but the governments had pre-determined the results by manipulating the rules. Egyptian XXXXXXXXXXXXX asserted that only a constitutional amendment restoring judicial supervision of the elections would result in higher voter turnout, but ruled out GOE support for such an amendment.

**14.** (C) XXXXXXXXXXXXX said he plans to organize his movement to expose 2010 parliamentary and 2011 presidential election violations, using new media tools such as cell-phone cameras and mobile uploads. According to XXXXXXXXXXXXX will support Mohammed El-F

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**Sectarian Killings in Naga Hamadi**  
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**15.** (C) Deputy Foreign Minister Wafaa Bassim said the GOE wants quick action, and needs to try the case under the Emergency Law to underscore the issue's "relevance to national security" and the GOE's clarity of purpose. Trying the case under the penal code "would take ages," she asserted. Bassim acknowledged this action is contrary to GOE assurances it uses the Emergency Law only for terrorism and drug cases (ref E). She said the Public Prosecutor's investigation has been thorough and transparent. MFA Deputy Assistant Minister for Human Rights Wael Aboulmagd conceded the GOE has favored "superficial reconciliation" efforts in the past, and did not respond "thoroughly" to sectarian violence. DAS Wittes expressed concern over broad GOE application of the Emergency Law, and urged the GOE to try the case under the penal code. She worried that a quick trial could preclude a full investigation, and that lingering

**16.** (C) Aboulmagd said the GOE does not view the draft NCHR Unified Places of Worship law, which would place approval for church and mosque construction and repairs under uniform GOE criteria, as a solution to sectarian tensions. He noted MOI views that such a law would exacerbate sectarian problems, and that Muslims "would call for Jihad" in response to increased church construction and repairs. Aboulmagd doubted the GOE would take action on the draft law.

17. (C) Mukhlis Kutb said NCHR sent a research team to Naga Hamadi, and will issue a detailed report on the killings. He attributed the killings to "an atmosphere of hate" spread on television and "on the streets." He assessed the GOE decided to try the assailants in an Emergency State Security court because a regular criminal trial "would take too much time." Kutb doubted a regular criminal court would convict Muslims for murdering Copts, due to "Sharia law considerations and the influence of mosques."

18. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXXX said "he feels humiliated every day as a Copt," hearing anti-Christian mosque sermons in his club and reading editorials

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U.S. Democracy Promotion  
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19. (C) MFA Deputy Assistant Minister for North American Affairs Amin Meleka said the GOE "has a problem" with U.S. funding for unregistered Egyptian NGOs through the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). Deputy Assistant Minister for Human Rights Wael Aboulmagd asserted that some NGOs choose not to register under the NGO law, but continue to operate. He claimed registered NGOs believe they are "at a disadvantage" by "playing by the rules." DAS Wittes pushed back, saying that the U.S. wants to support the full range of Egyptian civil society and the emergence of new actors, and that the GOE denies or does not act on some NGO applications. She hoped that the GOE would facilitate this process and increase civil society's role. Separately, human rights lawyer XXXXXXXXXXXXX called for public and private U.S. "moral support" for Egyptian civil society, and asserted that such support is more important than funding. XXXXXXXXXXXXX urged the U.S. to fund only "competent" Egyptian NGOs, warning that many organizations are "we

110. (U) DAS Wittes cleared this message.  
SCOBey